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COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS STIMULATED BY HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK

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A radio talk by Miss Daisy Deane Williamson, State Home Demonstration Leader, New Hampshire Extension Service, delivered in the Home Demonstration Radio Hour, July 3, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 49 associated NBC radio stations.

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The attitude of mind of John Average's family in New Hampshire is undergoing a change. The family is emerging from the depression into this re-adjustment period with a new determination to restore favorable living conditions and to rebuild the morale that has been lowered during the past few years.

Inside John Average's home you can find direct evidence of the family's participation in home demonstration restoration projects. Refinished Windsor chairs, reupholstered hair-cloth sofa and a restored tip-top table are in use in the living room.

With the house comfortable inside, the family has looked with critical eyes on the exterior. Lawns needed to be revived, plantings needed to be made. So John Average and his family became cooperators in the extension service home-landscaping project. They were among families in all counties of New Hampshire who offered their homes as demonstrations in this project which was developed cooperatively by the home demonstration and horticultural departments of the extension service.

And John Average and his family were among 500 people who participated in the landscaping demonstration. The hard hack, dogwood, pines, juniper, and other native plants were transplanted from the nearby woods and fields to their new settings according to plans worked out by the state horticulturist and approved by the cooperators.

These native plants and shrubs have added charm and atmosphere to the cozy white cottages. They harmonize with the low eaves and green shutters; they enhance the small-paned, ruffled-curtained windows; they beautify the flagstone walks leading up to paneled front doors. In short, they help to emphasize all that is best in the houses of typical rural New Hampshire construction.

Like the ever-widening circle caused by the pebble tossed into the stream, the influence of these meetings has spread until it has reached into every nook and corner of the State, stimulating action in the beautification of public and private grounds.

But the family of John Average and many others didn't stop with the improvement of their own premises. They saw the old community kitchen in its true light - no water supply, poorly arranged equipment, inadequate storage facilities and poor lighting. They became conscious of the fact that the burden of serving community meals falls heavily on a few women,

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and decided the least they could do would be to make that kitchen a more convenient place in which to work. How they went about improving 62 community kitchens in the State is well illustrated by what was done by Cocheco Grange in Strafford County, N. H.

Before the remodeling project was started under the direction of the home demonstration department, the kitchen had a dirt floor. For 50 years the group had been carrying all the water used in the building from a spring an eighth of a mile away. The kitchen was poorly organized and equipment inadequate.

With definite plans of procedure the men in the community agreed to do the work and the women to raise the necessary funds for materials. Fourteen men gave about two week's labor digging a well, building pass cupboards, laying a cement floor, resetting the sink and building work tables and supply closets. In fact they put in about everything in the way of conveniences except electricity which they hope to install in the near future. The work improved the score of their kitchen 292 percent.

The family of John Average and 800 others also embraced the opportunity to read some of the best of the new books. They enrolled in the State reading course organized and developed by the home demonstration department in cooperation with the Public Library Commission.

Gladys Hasty Carroll's "As the Earth Turns" is bringing to them a deeper appreciation of rural New England as they live with her through the changing seasons. They are enjoying a trip through picturesque New Hampshire with Cornelius Weygandt's "White Hills" without stirring from the family hearth and without spending a cent. They are learning the mystery of the stars without a telescope by perusing Sir James Jean's "Stars in Their Courses."

John Average and others once more looked beyond their own family pleasures and thought what a fine thing it would be to join with neighbors and friends from all over the State in forming community choruses to encourage more singing and better type of music. This project, too, was under the leadership of home demonstration workers. United groups have furnished special music at such gatherings as the annual meetings of the State Farm Bureau, State Congress of Parents and Teachers, and State Grange. It is not an unusual thing now to hear arrangements of Strauss' Blue Danube Waltz or Offenbach's Humoresque replacing the more ordinary popular tunes or the old standbys like Swanee River and Old Black Joe.

The rural people of New Hampshire are becoming more and more conscious of the fact that better homes results from working, singing and playing together. Because of this awakened consciousness, the family of John Average is coming into its own, once more.